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Leadership Changes in the Office of the Chief Information Officer

On June 24, 2005, Dave Combs was named Acting Chief Information Officer (CIO) at USDA, replacing Scott Charbo, now the CIO at the Department of Homeland Security. Prior to assuming this position, Combs was the Acting Deputy CIO.

Jerry E. Williams arrived at USDA on June 26 as the new Deputy Chief Information Officer. Prior to coming to USDA, Mr. Williams served as Acting CIO for the Small Business Administration.

Lynn Allen was named USDA's Associate Chief Information Officer for Cyber Security on July 24, 2005. Previously, he served as the Assistant Attorney General for Information Technology at the State Department.

Richard Roberts recently assumed the title of Associate Chief Information Officer for Information Technology Services. Roberts was previously the Executive Project Manager for the Service Center Technology Modernization Project at USDA.

USDA Begins Implementing the Federal Docket Management System

USDA officially kicked off its implementation of the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS) on June 28, 2005 with the E-Rulemaking Initiative's Managing Partner, agency regulatory leaders and Information Technology (IT) leadership. Along with the public Web site, regulations.gov, FDMS is a key component of the E-Rulemaking Presidential Initiative.

The E-Rulemaking Initiative provides citizens and businesses easy access to the rulemaking process while streamlining and increasing the efficiency of internal agency procedures.

FDMS offers a standard online procedure for Federal Departments to handle and process rules. Regulations.gov allows the public to obtain information and to provide comments on proposed rulemakings and non-rulemakings which are open for comment. USDA agencies are already providing the opportunity for citizens to submit comments to their posted rules on regulations.gov.

Led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), E-Rulemaking is designed so that the public has a single point of access to the regulatory process across the Federal Government. The Initiative also reduces the cost generated by duplicate information systems and technical infrastructures.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service will migrate to FDMS in September 2005. All USDA rulemaking agencies are scheduled to complete their implementations by March 2006.

AgLearn Continues to Grow

USDA employees increased their use of AgLearn, USDA's online training system, significantly in the recent months. Since April 1st, over 30,000 employees completed training online. There are many courses available to USDA employees. The following are the top ten courses taken since April 1, 2005.

Top AgLearn Courses: April - July 2005
USDA: Security Literacy and Basics FY 2005
Civil Rights: Handling Diversity in the Workplace
Civil Rights: Stopping Sexual Harrassment Before it Starts
IAS: Acquisition Management
IAS: Requisition Management Course
IAS: Requisition Management Training Aids
Ethics: Gifts Between Employees
Ethics: Use of Government Travel Cards
Ethics: Conflicting Interests
Ethics: Using Government Property and Time

FSIS Launches New Employee Intranet Utilizing Enterprise Shared Services

On June 1, 2005, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) launched its new intranet for agency employees, utilizing many of the Enterprise Shared Services (ESS) offered across USDA. The intranet contains helpful information for employees on public health issues. The topics include emergency preparedness, inspection programs, policy and guidance, program management, sampling data and test results. The intranet further provides essential employee information including benefits and pay, jobs and career development, training, facilities and services, travel and

commuting, work and home life balance, and employee rights and ethics.

FSIS is the first USDA agency to deploy an intranet that incorporates both the USDA Web Standards and ESS components including the eAuthentication Service, Web Content Management tools, and the Google Search Appliance.

Agency Web Sites Continue to Migrate to USDA Web Standards

As part of USDA's effort to offer improved Web usability and a consistent customer experience, all public sites must conform to the standards described in the USDA Web Style Guide. Below is a list of agencies' and offices' public Web sites that are successfully meeting USDA's Web Standards.

Agency or Office	Web Site
FAS	www.pecad.fas.usda.gov
FNS	mypyramid.gov
	www.mypyramidtracker.gov
FSIS	www.fsis.usda.gov
AHPIS	www.usda.gov/nais
	www.usda.gov/soybeanrust
NRCS	customerstatement.usda.gov
ARS	www.nutrition.gov
DA	www.usda.gov/da
OC	www.usda.gov
	www.usda.gov/farmbill
OCIO	www.ocio.usda.gov
	www.aglearn.usda.gov
	www.eauth.egov.usda.gov
	www.egov.usda.gov
	www.sharedservices.usda.gov
OIG	www.usda.gov/oig
NAD	www.nad.usda.gov

USDA eAuthentication Service Offers Employees Expanded Access

Recently, USDA's eAuthentication Service joined the General Services Administrations' (GSA) Federated architecture as a Credential Service Provider. This architecture, soon to be utilized across all of the Executive Departments and Agencies, incorporates a Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) that allows users with approved credentials to gain access to applications all across the Federal Government. As a result, all SAML-enabled applications that participate in the Federated Architecture will be accessible to USDA employees with appropriate clearance. USDA is one of the first Departments to make this important transition. GSA, the lead agency for the E-Authentication Presidential Initiative, hopes that this single sign-on will improve access to government - wide applications and reduce the need for redundant systems.

Since its inception, USDA has consistently increased the number of employees and customers utilizing the eAuthentication Service. As of July 31, 2005, over 84,000 employees received eAuthentication credentials. The eAuthentication Service has also had more than 61,000 external customers register on the USDA.gov site.

ESS Transitions to NITC

On April 1, 2005, USDA's National Information Technology Center (NITC) assumed control over USDA's Enterprise Shared Services (ESS). ESS is a suite of tools used across the Department to gain access to search engine capability, content management and quality control mechanisms, as well as employee database information. In addition to housing the servers and technical equipment required by ESS, NITC is now responsible for managing day-to-day technical activities and working with agencies to determine their needs. The Enterprise Planning, Project, and Information Management (EPP&IM) team assists with setting policy related to ESS and its use and implementation across USDA.

The necessary steps were implemented to facilitate a smooth transition and minimally impact ESS customers. Processes and procedures for using the ESS tools remain in place and the quality of service will be consistent with pre-transition levels.

Agencies Add Google Search Appliance to Web Sites

Recently, a number of USDA sites integrated the Google Search Appliance into their Web sites including the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Offered as part of USDA's ESS, the Google Appliance provides search capabilities and is customizable to agency Web sites. As more agencies convert to using official USDA Web Standards, Google will be implemented to both public and protected sites Department-wide.

Since its integration into the ESS suite of products, the Google Search Appliance has been well received by agencies across USDA. NITC is continuously evaluating the capacity of the Google Search Appliance in order to accommodate each agency's needs. USDA received a tremendous amount of feedback from many agencies regarding searchable URL patterns and page count estimates. This information is helping NITC size the appliance properly in order to accommodate additional users as more agencies adopt Google.

For more information or questions, please contact the eGovernment Team at:
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